



How to Use this Older Americans Month Kit

MAY 2005





Celebrate Long-Term Living!


Older Americans Month (OAM) is a great opportunity to celebrate the fact that we are staying healthier and living longer than ever before! The month-long celebration this May also provides an occasion to highlight the need for mid-life and older persons to make thoughtful choices so that they will be more likely to remain healthy, productive, and financially secure in their later lives. You and your organization play an important role in helping to publicize and celebrate Older Americans Month.

Many of the issues affecting older adults are addressed in programs funded through the Older Americans Act and administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging (AoA), working with its partners in the National Aging Services Network. We hope you will use the OAM celebration to highlight the outstanding work you are doing in your community. This kit provides some communication tools that can help, including many items that can be easily customized with your own logo, messages, and spokespersons.

This year's theme, "Celebrate Long-Term Living!" emphasizes the vigor and vitality that can result from good planning, good community-based long-term care options, and flexible, consumer-friendly systems. The theme can be the focal point for a variety of public awareness activities.

In this guide, "How to Use this Older Americans Month Kit," you will find tips and tools for promoting OAM among your constituents. These include:

- OAM logos in a variety of sizes to tag your local materials
- A sample press release
- A sample op-ed
- A "Swiss cheese" proclamation for release in your local jurisdiction
- Public service announcements (PSAs) for print
- PSAs for radio

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- Fact sheets on:
 - AoA's mission and programs
 - AoA's long-term living initiatives
 - A series of articles that can serve as inspiration for writing your own, or can be dropped directly into your publications. Article topics include:
 - Active engagement
 - Financial planning
 - Health promotion
 - Accessing home and community-based care
 - Transportation choices
 - The Eldercare Locator
 - Preparing for end-of-life
 - Improving health and quality of life with pets

In addition, the kit contains

- A *Mapping Your Future Your Way!* planning guide. This guide helps those approaching retirement assess their goals and develop strategies in critical areas such as health, finances, housing, work, leisure, and relationships.
- An excellent article with straightforward prescriptions for healthy aging reprinted with permission from *The Washington Post*.
- A calendar of national observances throughout the month of May.
- A self-mailing response card for you to complete and return to help us better serve your needs.

All of these materials are provided in hard copy and in electronic format on the enclosed CD-ROM, for easy mass reproduction and distribution.

Finally, as described in the pages following, the AoA Web-based version of this kit also includes media advocacy support materials that can help you frame and maximize media coverage of aging issues that are important in your community.

By celebrating Older Americans Month, you can help others understand the great value of older Americans and the work you do to improve their lives. Thank you for your commitment to older Americans and those who love them. Together, let's "Celebrate Long-Term Living!"

Strategies for Promoting Older Americans Month

Use your existing resources.


Creating a buzz within your own organization is the best way to get started, because your own people are usually the best conveyers of positive messages. Begin the process by using the communication tools already at your fingertips—your employee publications, e-mail lists, bulletin boards, and announcements. Even your payroll and invoice statements can contain the OAM logo and theme. Celebrate the month in staff meetings and presentations. Make sure all your employees and vendors know that May is Older Americans Month.

Reach out to the news media so they will work for you.



There are several pieces in the kit and at www.aoa.gov to help you overcome any initial hesitation you might have about approaching the media. For example, the sample "Swiss-cheese" press release is a generic announcement about OAM. It provides a framework with "holes" that you can fill in with your organization's name and spokesperson. If you host a special event or activity during the month, you can use the Swiss cheese press release as a guide to developing

your own message to the media about your specific event. Remember to communicate the news value of your event in the first paragraph by



answering the questions Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How? Fax your press release to the news or feature editors of your local newspapers, television and radio stations, and reporters on the beat who have previously covered your organization or events. Give the media plenty of time to plan their coverage—at least three days before the event. Most important, provide a contact person whom journalists can call to get additional information. The contact could be someone from your office or organization, or a knowledgeable outside source that knows the issues.

Meet with your editorial board.

When the editorial page of your local newspaper speaks out on a topic, it reaches farther and carries greater influence than when staff or advocates say the same thing. Meeting with your newspaper's editorial board can be an effective strategy for communicating why issues facing older Americans are important and what your organization is doing about them. Editorial board meetings can be arranged at almost every newspaper. Choose your team wisely and craft your leave-behind materials carefully. You may also want to role-play before you go. Remember that your editorial board relies on meetings with their readers and community leaders to learn what topics they should be covering so do not be shy about asking! More information about editorial board visits is available at www.aoa.gov/press/oam/oam.asp.

Remember the op-ed and editorial pages.

Although only 10 percent of people read the editorial and op-ed pages routinely, these readers include every community's gatekeepers and key decision-makers. Letters to the editor and op-eds allow you to control the content of your message, as you want your audience to see it. Remember that these venues have strict rules regarding word length and the timeliness of your topic. To learn a newspaper's rules, explore the editorial policy on its web site, or simply call and ask for the editorial department. Letters, often limited to 200 to 300 words, are



more likely to be published if they respond to a story that has run in the past few days. Op-eds can be longer (typically 800 words), and are more likely to be published if you first have a conversation with the op-ed editor about the length and format of the piece you submit.

Place public service announcements (PSAs).



PSAs are another way of enlisting the media as a partner in your efforts to promote Older Americans Month. Broadcast networks regulated by the Federal Communications Commission are required by law to provide a certain amount of advertising for nonprofit organizations free of charge. Many media outlets utilize PSAs to maintain good community relations even when they are not required to do so. This kit contains copy for print PSAs of various sizes and scripts for radio PSAs of

various lengths. Remember PSA planning is often done far in advance. Contact the public service directors of your local media outlets as soon as possible to seek placements. The best way to deliver PSAs is in person. If this is not possible, explain in your cover letter that the PSA is in celebration of Older Americans Month, May 2005, and should be

run as a community service promoting awareness of the value and needs of aging citizens and their caregivers. If you can, link the PSA to a specific event or issue that is in the news. Consider calling your favorite radio announcer, or the host of the program with the largest share of the morning drive audience, and ask if that person will record the radio script. This will help to create a partnership with the station and confer a sense of shared ownership for OAM that may get you a lot of "free" or "earned" coverage.

Issue a proclamation.



Ask your governor, mayor, or an other local official to support Older Americans Month by issuing a proclamation. You can adapt the sample proclamation included in this kit by inserting local demographic information. Offer to assist the public official in any way that would help, including planning and holding a news conference for the event. Invite your community partners to participate.

Host a special event.

In addition to issuing a proclamation, there are many other events you could host to celebrate OAM, thank your supporters, and showcase your programs and services. Consider launching an initiative, hosting a ceremony or banquet, issuing awards to volunteers, or recognizing older citizens who make outstanding contributions to your community. The Older Americans Month theme, "Celebrate Long-Term Living!" provides an excellent backdrop for celebratory events. The CD-ROM in this kit also contains a customizable flyer that can be used to promote and publicize such a celebration. Team with other local partners in the

National Aging Services Network to plan the specifics of the event and defray the costs. You can also solicit contributions, including in-kind contributions from local businesses. When possible, involve local celebrities and government officials whose presence can attract the press and make the event more newsworthy. Don't forget to invite your local media.

Provide human interest.

The feature articles contained in this kit were written to humanize the key aspects of healthy aging. Whether the issue is transportation, financial planning, health promotion or accessing care, articles that tell real stories will attract readers, give them something to relate to, and set a warm, supportive tone. Feel free to use these articles "as-is" or to customize them with people and stories from your own community. The articles can also be tailored to include information about your programs and services, the facts and statistics about older adults in your area, and quotes from local people.

Make it visual.



The logos included in this kit serve as eye-catching reminders of OAM and the individuals we celebrate in May – older Americans, their caregivers, service providers, family, and friends. Feel free to display the OAM logo in all print materials you design for local use. Include it in press releases, proclamations, and special materials that you develop. The logo will create a recognizable identity to link different events throughout the month, and help to raise awareness nationwide. The

OAM poster is available on the enclosed CD-ROM.



Other Resources

Partners.

Collaborating with other organizations will enhance your Older Americans Month activities and celebrations. Reach out to the many organizations, institutions, and other entities that serve constituents over age 60. Even if they cannot contribute to your specific events, outreach will raise your stature and their awareness.

AoA's Web site.

Do not forget to visit www.aoa.gov for additional information, materials, and links. Resources dealing with the Older Americans Act, the national Family Caregiver Support Program, the Elderly Nutrition Program, the *You Can!* Steps to Healthier Aging campaign, health promotion and disease prevention activities, budget and fiscal information, state programs and plans, nationwide collaborations, and a host of other programs and services are available at the click of your mouse.

This year, for the first time, AoA is pleased to provide a virtual Media Advocacy Toolkit on its Web site. This toolkit includes resources for framing your message in the media, developing a media list, nurturing and caring for reporters, and more.

Thank You

Your contribution to publicizing and celebrating Older Americans Month in your community is critical to the success of our work. Let us know what you think about this kit by completing the self-mailing response card enclosed in this kit. Through your feedback, we will become better at serving you. Good luck in your efforts!





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